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Effective Labor /Management Team Procedures in the Fire Service

Eric Kriwer

Prescott Fire Department, Prescott, Arizona

### CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

The problem is that the Prescott Fire Department has not evaluated its labor/management team procedure for the efficiency in improving strained labor/management relations. The purpose of this descriptive research project is to assess the Prescott Fire Department labor/management team procedure for improved effectiveness that will build enhanced collaborative relationships. The project attempted to answer the questions: (a) What are the characteristics of effective labor/management team procedures? (b) What are the obstacles that prohibit collaborative labor/management relationships? (c) What are the components in Prescott Fire Department's current labor/management team procedure? (d) How does Prescott Fire Department's labor/management team procedure meet the characteristics for successful recognized labor/management collaboration? The method involved conducting research techniques of literature review, collection of data through an employee survey and questionnaire, professional journals, and review of the Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure versus characteristics established by fire service leaders. Recommendations included formal adoption of the labor/management team procedure into policy, assure knowledge and review of the team procedure by all personnel, networking with the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), Arizona Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA), and International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) organizational studies and conference opportunities in the arena of labor/management relations, and finally establish trust and team building opportunities with in the Prescott Fire Department while holding labor and management equally responsible to bring improvement to the collaborative process.

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## Effective Labor/Management Team Procedures in the Fire Service

### Introduction

The American Fire Service is being scrutinized like never before in recent history. Difficult economic times, public scrutiny of government, political agendas, and criticism of public safety pensions have left a strain on fire service labor/management relationships. Fire Chiefs and labor officials are telling anyone who will listen that the current economic times are presenting some of the most difficult operational challenges they have faced in their careers (Compton, 2009, p. 24). Many of these operational difficulties are spilling over into strained labor/management relationships. These intricate labor/management relationships can place in question the loyalty and commitment to organizations common objectives if labor/management relations cannot stay focused on a common goal.

The City of Prescott Fire Department (PFD) and the United Yavapai Firefighters Local 3066 (Local 3066) have not been immune to the labor/management struggles during these difficult economic times. PFD fire chiefs and Local 3066 union leaders face common challenges as we attempt to maintain relationships and trust that has been formed over previous years. We must strive to work together to find solutions (Gorud, 2009, p. 1). The labor/management team procedure was created to provide guidance and direction to the PFD and the Local 3066 as we progress into the future as an organization.

The problem is that the PFD has not evaluated its labor/management team procedure for effectiveness in improving strained labor/management relations in the department. In 2009, the Prescott Fire Department and Local 3066 adopted our labor/management team procedure. Prescott Fire Chief Bruce Martinez welcomed the labor/management team approach. We were aware that increasing complex economic times were starting to cause stress in our organization.

The need for a labor/management team procedure that improved communications in our labor/management process had become paramount, Martinez explained. The intent was to assist us in maintaining a common purpose while meeting the needs of both our external and internal customers (B. Martinez, personal communication, July 27, 2010). As a result of this procedure, labor/management committees were formed with varied success by labor and management. *The Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* (PFDLMTP) illustrates Prescott Fire Department's resilience to improving relations between labor and management, but a lack of assurance for its overall effectiveness has created difficulties in the organization regarding the labor/management relationship.

The purpose of this applied research project is to assess the PFDLMTP for improved effectiveness that will build enhanced collaborative relationships. This applied research project will seek to answer the questions: (a) What are the characteristics of effective labor/management team procedures? (b) What are the obstacles that prohibit collaborative labor/management relationships? (c) What are the components in Prescott Fire Department's current labor/management team procedure? (d) How does Prescott Fire Department's labor/management team procedure meet the characteristics for successful recognized labor management collaboration?

The descriptive research methodology will be utilized to assess the PFDLMTP with suggested recognized characteristics that meet successful collaboration techniques and behaviors as we move forward to create a trustworthy and flourishing organization. The research includes: review of technical reports and data released by, but not limited to, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the Arizona Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA), review of labor/management research information provided from

the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona (PFFA), labor relation and public administration text books, personal interviews, industry periodicals and magazines, a survey of Prescott Fire Department personnel, a questionnaire to PFD senior staff and Local 3066 leadership, and a review of the Prescott Fire Department's adopted labor/management team procedure related to characteristics of effective labor/management procedures.

### Background and Significance

The Prescott Fire Department (PFD) is located in Prescott, Arizona. PFD is a career fire department that provides fire and all risk emergency response, basic and advanced emergency medical care, technical rescue, water rescue, and hazardous materials response. The City of Prescott is located in Yavapai County. Yavapai County covers 8,125 square miles and is located in the central portion of the state. The forest and desert highlands offer mountainous landscapes, elevations ranging from 4,000 to 9,000 feet that result in cool summers and cold winters (Arizona Department of Emergency Management [AZDEM], 2007, p. 77). The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the 2000 population of Prescott was approximately 34,000; with 9,100 residents greater than 65 years of age and 1,300 residents under the age of 5. The 2010 census numbers should show a moderate increase in Prescott's population, with proportionate increases in high risk populations. Prescott has now grown to an estimated population of 48,000 residents.

There are approximately 100 fire department personnel, including administrative and clerical staff, mechanics, dispatchers, fire inspectors, training specialists, and fire investigators. Five fire stations house five engine companies, two truck companies, a hazardous response unit, and three brush trucks. All of the approximately 60 line personnel are cross trained as both firefighters and either emergency medical technicians or paramedics. The department is

organized into five functional divisions: (a) Administration; (b) Fire and Emergency Medical Operations; (c) Fire Prevention; (d) Training; and (e) Wildland.

The United Yavapai Firefighters Local 3066 (Local 3066) has been a proud part of the communities in the Prescott area for over 25 years (United Yavapai Firefighters Local 3066, 2009, p. 2). It has over 200 members, representing 5 different fire departments, is part of the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), and falls under the umbrella of the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona (PFFA). In October 2009, the Local 3066 Prescott Chapter and the Prescott Fire Department Administration adopted the *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* (PFDLMTP) to improve communication and collaborative efforts in the organization.

Recently, the Prescott Fire Department has experienced discord in the labor/management relationship. Trust amongst labor and management has declined as both senior staff and line personnel are under constant public scrutiny regarding pay, benefits, and retirement. The stress has shown increasing difficulty in the continuance of a positive work environment that has been enjoyed in previous years. In a labor/management conflict, both sides have leaders and followers, and the question of loyalty is going to be on both sides of the table (Coleman, 2009, p. 44). The question of loyalty amongst members of the organization has started to disrupt daily operations and relationships in the PFD.

This applied research project relates to the Executive Fire Officers Program and the *Executive Leadership* course at the National Fire Academy (NFA), which was attended in May 2010. The relation to the research problem and content of the research paper from the attended course is as follows: Leadership is a process through which an individual influences others toward the accomplishment of common goals (Federal Emergency Management Agency



[FEMA], 2005, Chapter 3). Additionally, the research topic relates to and is supportive of the United States Fire Administrative (USFA) operational objective, which is to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2007).

### Literature Review

The literature review process was primarily focused on four research questions related to the problem statement. These questions regarded improving the effectiveness of the collaborative relationship between labor/management at Prescott Fire Department (PFD) through the adopted team procedure. The literature review process started at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) located on the campus of the National Fire Academy (NFA) while attending the *Executive Leadership* course. Resource materials researched included items such as: textbooks, periodicals, internet articles, trade journals, technical reports, a questionnaire, and an inter-departmental survey. Additionally, the *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* (PFDLMTP) was reviewed to evaluate characteristics that would build enhanced collaborative relationships within the organization.

The literature review for this applied research project concentrated on effective team procedures and behaviors of high performing teams that can improve trust and a teamwork approach to emerging issues at the PFD. Initial topic material researched related to this area included: (a) Labor union history and the processes that initiated the collaborative team process; (b) Characteristics of a high performing team; (c) Actions taken by the Arizona Fire Service relating to improved collaborative relationships; and (d) Description of the *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* (PFDLMTP).

Labor unions have been an integral part of the public sector for many years. The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is a volunteer federation of more than a hundred national and international labor unions operating in the United States (Shafritz & Russell, 2005, p. 417). According to AFL-CIO statistics, they represent over 13 million workers of which the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) belongs to with an estimated 150,000 members.

Overall the number of IAFF members may seem small in comparison to the overall numbers of nationally unionized members, a greater percentage firefighters are union members than workers in any other public sector occupation (Shafritz & Russell, 2005, p. 418). Having a high percentage of the professional work force involved in the labor-management process has made the fire service the example in many instances, especially regards in to relationship building and procedures that generate collaborative interaction.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), created in 1935 by an act of Congress, is the prototype of administrative agencies dealing with labor relations (Shafritz & Russell, 2005, p. 419). Guidelines are set through the NLRB to ensure fair and equitable treatment of both labor and management. These procedures determine whether certain practices of employers or unions are unfair labor practices. The NLRB has been adapted to the public sector by the federal government and several states (Shafritz & Russell, 2005, p. 419).

The equilibrium has always been important to labor/management relations and attempting to maintain equality during adversarial interactions. Hays and Kearney (2003) explain that adversariness often translates into tedious bickering over relatively insignificant issues and a waste of the employer's time and the tax-payers money. The preservation of positive interactions and leadership between labor/management continues to be the foundation of team

success; even if the leadership at times appears isolated. Exceptional leaders will rise to the personal responsibility challenge, even if no one else is willing to join them (Alyn, 2010, p. 76).

The fire service has led many employee groups in the participative employee process. Employee involvement should be meaningful, with employee views and decisions receiving serious consideration by management (Hays & Kearney, 2003, p. 329). A lack of commitment by both labor and management can be reflective in frustrations and disagreements that impede the collaborative effort of an organization. Briese (1999) states that in today's fire service, there is an essential need for the creation of a leadership partnership between local fire chiefs and their union presidents, as well as further development of a completely new philosophy of labor/management relations.

To build a continuum of successful characteristics of a labor/management team procedure, it is paramount to learn the characteristics of a high performing team. The need for high team performance has been amplified in our current times of economic struggle. Grorud (2009) explains that as the economy continues to challenge our departments, the focus on cooperation and collaboration is even more important. Many positive team characteristics have been documented that lead to long lasting success in thriving organizations.

Teamwork is the most basic concept that can lead to achievement of collaborative relationships. Almost all high performing teams have certain characteristics in common (Magnusson Training and Consulting LLC, 2010, p. 1). The use of these characteristics can assist an organization towards the goal of success and harmony. The use of common goals and purpose is one of the most common characteristics needed in an organization. A team requires a clearly stated purpose and goals; not just an understanding of what needs to be done at the moment, but an understanding of the overall focus of the team (Magnusson Training and

Consulting LLC, 2010, p. 1). A failure to acknowledge the common goal of the team can lead to counter productive procedures and ultimately failure of desired results.

By reducing the potential for negative conflict that can have harmful effects on the organization, the focus on employee contribution may sustain the success of the collaborative process. A focus on service with employee participation can also be the doorway to reducing confrontation in collective bargaining relationships that have a history of conflict (United States Department of Labor, n.d., p. 1). Embracing this participation can provide involvement that is beneficial to the ability of meeting organizational goals.

In the labor/management process there can be confusion to who is truly leading the organization. Often fire chiefs have difficulty in the perception that they are not truly leading the organization. Dynamic teams share leadership roles among members (Magnusson Training and Consulting LLC, 2010, p. 2). Frequently a fire service leader who is not afraid to let others share in the success of the team may find respect and support in the organization. By providing ownership to individuals in the organization there can be the potential for success in the team concept.

In successful cooperative arrangements, management operates in less hierarchical ways and agrees, through joint and team structures established, to share decision-making authority where it has not traditionally done so in the past (United States Department of Labor, n.d., p. 4). The sharing of this decision-making process can be difficult to administer, but rewarding as the team builds trust through the labor/management process. At the core of any positive relationship resides mutual trust and mutual respect (Compton, 2010, p. 22).

On February 15, 2008, Arizona Fire Service leadership from the Arizona Fire Chief's Association (AFCA) and the Professional Fire Fighters of Arizona (PFFA) met to discuss Fire

Service Labor/Management relations in Arizona (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 1). Gaillard and Jeffries (2008) explain that the leadership unanimously agreed that productive labor/management relations are crucial for a progressive and effective Arizona Fire Service. A team approach to solutions is the best way to diminish various forms of strife and unrest and ensure acumen of focus on strong service delivery. The application of dedicated and professional service delivery is at the core of the fire service mission. Without effort and commitment from labor and management the success of the organization can become compromised.

Gaillard and Jeffries (2008) summarize that history has shown that negative labor/management relations are a significant distraction to our mission and erode the foundations we have built for a high service delivery, which our public has come to expect of us and respect us for. The equity we have gained in this trust can be challenged if we lose sight of our mission and core service delivery commitment. One of the common themes for an agreed upon labor/management team procedure is based on common vision. Regardless of the role each one plays in a Fire and Emergency Medical Service agency, every member is driven by a purpose to make a significant difference in the lives of our citizens (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 8).

The balance of this unified labor/management commitment can be a defined characteristic for organizational accomplishment. The challenge facing us today is a situation where, in some communities, relations are contentious or simply non-existent (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 6). Relationship building can be completed through a labor/management team procedure that concentrates on relationship building, commitment, and common goals. Fire department administrators and labor leaders must maintain an open and transparent dialogue (LeDuc, Teel, & Walsh, 2010, p. 1). Without this open and trustful dialogue, the labor/management team procedure may be destined for impending failure. Gamesmanship,

confrontation, and maneuvering can diminish trust and strain relationships (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 9). Once relationships start to deteriorate they can be difficult to recover and may stifle the team effectiveness.

In October of 2009, the *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* (PFDLMTP) was informally adopted into the organization with the purpose of making the PFD more effective as an organization (United Yavapai Fire Fighters Local 3066, 2009, p. 1). The document goes on to discuss the agreement process and procedures that will increase the collaborative process at the PFD.

Additionally, the PFDLMTP stresses the need for relationship building and the commitment of trust through common goals and objectives. Labor and management must continually work on the issue of trust, trust in the process, and foster trust among the individuals and the participants individually (United Yavapai Fire Fighters Local 3066, 2009, p. 1). Gaillard and Jeffries (2008) seem to agree as they define trust as the condition and resulting obligation of having confidence placed on oneself.

The PFDLMTP describes the procedure through guidelines that are intended to form the process and assure uniformity. Many of these guidelines are described in the formation of labor/management subcommittees. Labor/management teams and subcommittees are important parts of the operation in the PFD (United Yavapai Fire Fighters Local 3066, 2009, p. 2). The subcommittees were defined and assigned a leadership position. Every labor/management team and subcommittee shall have a management and a labor co-chair (United Yavapai Fire Fighters Local 3066, 2009, p. 2). The intent appears to promote collaboration through the labor/management committee process that minimizes issues before they grow into complex

problems. In the vast majority of issues, the labor/management teams and subcommittees will be able to reach consensus (United Yavapai Fire Fighters Local 3066, 2009, p. 4).

Regardless of the obstacles faced during the labor/management team process, it is paramount that leadership from the chief staff and union leadership stay focused on the intent of the procedure. Management and labor leadership must commit to participate in planning and development (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 16). The pillar of this commitment appears to be based on trust. The basis for this labor/management team process is based on ownership within the organization. The collaborative process can make improvements in the organization that can maximize the group into a high performing team reflecting all members. The most important strength we have for the future is the relationship that we have built with each other (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 17).

### Procedures

The purpose of this research is to describe the effective characteristics of a labor/management team procedure in comparison to the Prescott Fire Department current team procedure. Successful team behaviors and concepts were reviewed to aid in the research process. The data collected would provide evaluation of the current *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* and its effectiveness in producing a conducive and collaborative labor/management environment at the Prescott Fire Department. Criteria that represented high performing teams and their characteristics were used to describe the current status and desired outcomes that will improve the effectiveness in building positive employee relationships, while building trust between labor and management at the Prescott Fire Department.

Applied research was completed to determine these characteristics of high performing teams and its relevance to an effective labor/management team procedure. Research consisted of textbook searches, internet searches, PFD employee survey, professional journals, and a personal communication questionnaire with various Prescott Fire Department chief staff and United Yavapai Fire Fighters Local 3066 leadership.

Descriptive research concentrated on methodologies that identified the characteristics needed for valuable mutual labor/management relationships. Methods that described team building behaviors, analysis, effectiveness, and evaluation were all researched. Additionally, nationally recognized fire service professionals, an employee survey (Appendix A) and results (Appendix B), questionnaire (Appendix C) to Prescott Fire Department labor leadership and chief officers were also researched.

Prescott Fire Department employees were asked to participate in a survey (Appendix A) that provided feedback and described their opinion related to the current status of the labor/management relationship at the Prescott Fire Department. The survey was intended to provide feedback by employees of the Prescott Fire Department that described knowledge of the current labor/management team procedure, describe the current strength of the labor/management relationship, and priorities that may build trust and collaboration in the PFD.

The survey was sent to over 70 personnel with 37 respondents. The survey return rate of 53% provided a variety of feedback results relating to the desired outcome of the research. The survey was sent to both labor and management in the PFD, with results that only identified respondents by years of service at PFD (Appendix B).

A questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent by email on November 14, 2010 to members of the PFD chief staff and Local 3066 labor leadership who were all active participants during the



adoption of the *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure*. The questionnaires were sent to the PFD senior staff which included the: (a) Fire chief; (b) Division chief of operations; and (c) Two battalion chiefs. Questionnaires sent to labor leadership included: (a) Local 3066 president; (b) PFD local 3066 chapter president; and (c) Three PFD trustees. Returned questionnaires included three (75%) from PFD senior staff and two (40%) from Local 3066 leadership.

The questionnaire was utilized as a research measuring tool to describe: (a) Current use of the PFDLMTP and it's effectiveness regarding collaboration between labor/management at the PFD; (b) Opinions and feedback on how a formal adoption would enhance commitment to the collaborative process; and (c) Describe procedures of the PFDLMTP that are be utilized at appropriate levels of commitment and dissimilar procedures which are not being used as an effective tool to build collaborative relations at the PFD. The questionnaire was a valuable measuring tool when describing the current status of the PFDLMTP and overall assessment of the current mutual labor/management relationship by leadership groups at PFD.

#### *Assumptions and Limitations*

Assumptions were made that each of the survey respondents were qualified to provide feedback relating to their ability to review and fully comprehend the PFDLMTP. It is also assumed that the survey was completed with shared intent by respondents to describe and provide responses on their opinions describing the current status of labor/management relations in the PFD. It is assumed that respondents wanted to see improved relationships in the organization and were able to list priorities that assisted in addressing the applied research problem and purpose statements.

Limitations were found in both the number of respondents to the survey and questionnaire related to personnel and their description of the current effectiveness of the PFDLMTP regarding collaborative relationships at PFD. A larger sample of respondents in both the survey and questionnaire measuring tools would have been beneficial to the final research outcome.

Other limitations to the researcher were discovered on the limited statistical data available in relation to the descriptions of successful characteristics relating directly to labor/management team procedures in the fire service. The evaluation regarding effectiveness in labor/management team procedures can be assumed by the decrease of negative interactions between labor/management associations and improved collaborative labor/management relationships in the fire service.

Although descriptive research was plentiful regarding the need for positive labor/management relationships in organizations, additional detailed survey questions outside the PFD employee group may be beneficial to the correlation between successful organizations and recognized team characteristics in collaborative relationships.

## Results

Results by the researcher were categorized into three general research tools: (a) Literature review of research questions presented in the introduction of the applied research project; (b) Survey conducted with PFD employees; and the (c) Questionnaire to PFD senior staff and Local 3066 leadership.

The research results indicated that one of the main characteristics in successful labor/management team procedures are based on trust and relationship building. In order to commit to the success of these collaborative relationships, research indicated that there was

consistency in the repetitive mentioning of trust and commitment to those participating in the labor/management process.

The IAFF and IAFC have for years taken the lead in encouraging the development of positive, productive and effective labor/management relations and processes (Compton, 2009, p. 24). While the encouragement has been obvious from fire service leadership associations and labor groups, and the intent positive in nature, current economic difficulties have continued to make a collaborative relationship challenging. The economic meltdown has brought unprecedented budget pressure on communities across the United States, which is in turn creating unprecedented pressures on fire departments (LeDuc et al., 2010, p. 1). Negative disposition to this economic downturn has created distrust, animosity, self-serving priorities, and lack of commitment to accomplishment to many organizations.

The most informative results from the completed research that described positive and negative characteristics in a collaborative labor/management team procedure were found in the survey (Appendix A). Survey results that were sent to all PFD personnel in September 2010, (Appendix B), and questionnaire sent in November 2010 (Appendix C). The survey and questionnaire described many areas for improvement and opportunities for the PFD regarding the labor/management procedure and the success of a collaborative relationship.

One of the most informative results from the survey conveyed that only 48.6% of the respondents have ever reviewed the PFDLMTP. The data describes the difficulty in getting organizational commitment to review a document that is detailed in building a collaborative relationship between labor and management at PFD.

The survey results showed that 75.6% of the respondents rated the current strength of the PFD labor/management relationship as being average to excellent. In retrospect, there were

24.3% of respondents who rated the relationship as poor, with no respondents rating in the very poor category. Table 1 indicates the results of survey question: How would you rate the current strength of the Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Relationship?

Table 1

## PFD Labor/Management Relationship Strength

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
10.8%	29.7%	35.1%	24.3%	0.0%

While there is no result describing the relationship as being very poor, it shows there is room for improvement in the results from Table 1. The survey also showed the promise of an organizational commitment by the PFD and Local 3066 to the PFDLMTP and improved relations with 83.3% of the respondents describing the procedure as a way to an improved labor/management relationship within the organization. Table 2 shows the statistical data in support of the question: Do you feel the PFDLMTP can improve the labor/management relationship?

Table 2

## PFDLMTP-Way to Improved Relations at PFD

Yes	No
83.3%	16.7%

Lastly, the survey seemed to support the characteristics that support a collaborative labor/management team procedure with 70.3% of survey respondents feeling that the best way to abide by the PFDLMTP is holding labor and management equally accountable to the commitment of the procedure. Additional results indicated that 51.4% needed personnel

involvement and 40.5% felt the labor/management subcommittee process would be beneficial in showing a commitment to the PFDLMTP.

As a result of the informal adoption of the PFDLMTP, five PFD Labor/Management Sub-Committees were formed in October 2009 that consist of: (a) Health and safety; (b) Budget, pay, and benefits; (c) Policy and procedure; (d) Training and education, fire and emergency medical service; and (e) Equipment, apparatus and facilities. Since the implementation of these labor/management subcommittees, there have been varying degrees of accomplishment regarding follow-up.

A questionnaire (Appendix C) was formulated to provide feedback from senior staff and Local 3066 at the PFD describing the current status, use, and benefit to the organization regarding the informal adoption of the PFDLMTP. The results of the questionnaire varied on expected outcomes and effectiveness in improving the collaborative relationship at the PFD. The feedback from the questionnaire correlates the positive and negative aspects regarding the distinctiveness of successful and unsuccessful collaborative relationships in organizations.

The questionnaire was exceedingly informative regarding data by describing the current status of the collaborative relationship between the PFD and Local 3066. Fire Chief Bruce Martinez states that we have only managed to achieve minor success from what I feel is a lack of commitment and trust on both sides (B. Martinez, personal communication, November 15, 2010). The lack of trust and commitment is one of the major stumbling blocks regarding the lack of collaborative success in organizations. President of Local 3066, Tom Haney agrees that the need for trust between the PFD and Local 3066 must be made a priority before we can possibly find success in the labor/management process (T. Haney, personal communication, November 18, 2010).

There appears to be an understanding that the team procedure process at the PFD is something that may take time to be successful. Local 3066 Prescott Chapter trustee, Dan Hutchinson commented that feedback seems to indicate that the procedure has merit and he feels that continued implementation of the process will have a positive impact on our department as a whole (D. Hutchison , personal communication, November 19, 2010). PFD Battalion Chief Ralph Lucas agrees that the document has potential as very useful tool, but there is a current disconnect with relationships that is interfering with the process (R. Lucas, personal communication, November 18, 2010). The disconnect appears to be at the basis for failure in a successful labor/management collaborative relationship at the PFD. PFD Division Chief Don Devendorf again reiterates that in his opinion to formalize a process that people are not willing to support will destine it for failure (D. Devendorf, personal communication, November 19, 2010). The results of the questionnaire measuring tool appear to show insufficient organizational commitment to the PFDLMTP.

The questionnaire still offered results that described promise in the collaborative process at the PFD. It was felt that with renewed commitment and refocus on relationship building, the PFDLMTP could improve interaction at the PFD. Martinez (2010) agrees that the intent of the procedure is for labor and management to collaborate and improve our services both internally and externally. Haney (2010) is supportive of not giving up on the process; Local 3066 will continue to build relationships with the leadership at the PFD, and through the PFDLMTP we will improve our mutual affiliation and allow labor to assist management in the decision process.

As the PFD labor/management relationship appears to have room for improvement as indicated the results of the applied research, it has become evident that leadership members are willing to make efforts to progress. The research questions regarding the problem statement and

purpose of the applied research show merit in continued efforts at making improvements to the commitment of the PFDLMTP.

### Discussion

In today's fire service, the need for collaborative labor/management relations has become more apparent as we continue to struggle through the most difficult economic times witnessed during most of our careers. The need for an entire team effort has become paramount as we find ways to maintain service levels and relationships in our organizations. Employee involvement should be meaningful, with employee views and decisions receiving serious consideration by management (Hays & Kearney, 2003, p. 329). Employee involvement will only make the PFD stronger, and in the end, increase moral that will reflect in our everyday activities.

Research was conducted that looked at the characteristics of high performing teams and evaluated our PFDLMTP for effectiveness and described the current status of our relationship between labor and management. The literature review was intentionally specific to the recent historical data examining the efforts of organizations like the PFFA and, the AFCA that are dedicated to building relationships between labor/management. Galliard and Jeffries (2008) explain that the leadership unanimously agreed that productive labor/management relations are crucial for a progressive and effective Arizona Fire Service. A team approach to solutions is the best way to diminish various forms of strife, unrest, and ensure a sharp focus on strong service delivery. The approach by fire service leadership in Arizona has set the ground work on how labor/management relationships should work and what the PFD should strive to emulate.

The literature review continued to clarify characteristics of high performing teams in a collaborative environment and describes behaviors that would derail the success of the PFDLMTP. Gamesmanship, confrontation, and maneuvering can diminish trust and strain

relationships (Gaillard & Jeffries, 2008, p. 9). The feedback provided some of the current behaviors being exhibited at the PFD and the need to make improvements before they make a larger divide between labor and management.

The survey provided various results from the PFD employees regarding the hope of improved relations and holding all members accountable for the success of the labor/management relationship. The feedback conveys that the PFD has struggled through recent trust discrepancies and strained labor/management relations in the organization.

Research conducted through the questionnaire was the most beneficial to the researcher. The questionnaire describes the current status of the PFD labor/management relationship and the problems with the PFDLMTP being informally adopted into the organization. The feedback from current PFD senior staff and labor leadership shows potential for improved relations, but a lack of trust and commitment has slowed the progress of the collaborative relationship. Initial research concerning the characteristics of effective labor/management team procedures was refocused on the characteristics of a high performing team in organizations.

Conclusions can be made that the researcher feels enhanced preparation in understanding the current relationship at the PFD regarding the labor/management relationship and the slow implementation of the PFDLMTP. There is also increased understanding of how leadership in the department from both a labor and management standpoint describes the current status of the relationship. While the research does not find conclusion in answering all of the research questions regarding the research purpose and problem statement, it is beneficial and an initiation into further research may have potential. The exploratory research will be of assistance, as feedback can be provided by the researcher intending to improve the relationship at the PFD and maximize the effectiveness of the PFDLMTP.



## Recommendations

The purpose of this descriptive research project was to assess the Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure for improved effectiveness that will build enhanced collaborative relationships in the organization. The characteristics that described how high performing teams function and the behaviors that build trust and collaboration were of specific focus. There are four recommendations for enhancement to the *Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure* (PFDLMTP) that will improve strained relationships and strengthen the collaborative process bringing partnership cohesiveness to the organization.

First, a formal acceptance of the PFDLMTP needs to be adopted into policy. The document has not been taken seriously by all levels of labor/management due to the informal implementation. By adopting PFDLMTP into policy, it will have to be recognized and implemented into the culture of the organization. The adoption will allow all members to understand how the procedure can be an effective tool to interact as an organization.

Secondly, the document has to be reviewed and understood by all the PFD personnel. The survey results indicated that only 48.6% of the respondents have ever reviewed the PFDLMTP. A poor review rate is unacceptable and needs immediate improvement. If the procedure was implemented into policy, there would be room for accountability for personnel to review and understand the procedures intent. Personnel from both labor and management would have the ability to participate in the team procedure process, but only if they fully understood the intent to build collaboration in the organization.

Third, network with the IAFF, AFCA, and IAFC leadership groups, studies, and conference opportunities in the arena of labor/management relations. By doing so, we will

continue to assure that the PFD is implementing the most current standards of collaboration procedures. The professional network will also allow improved communications between labor and management as the organization will be able to exchange information with other parties with similar experiences.

Lastly, establish trust within in the organization; work on team building in the relationship process, and hold labor and management equally responsible in following the guidelines of the PFDLMTP. The commitment can bring success to the collaborative process at the PFD. Research was clear that without trust and support, any organization is suspect to strained relationships. Prescott Fire Department appears ready to take these recommendations forward and commit to a collaborative partnership between labor and management through the PFDLMTP.

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## Appendix A

## Prescott Fire Department Employee Survey

- 1.) How many years of experience do you have with the Prescott Fire Department?

1-5                      6-10                      11-20                      21+

- 2.) Have you ever reviewed the Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure?

Yes

No

- 3.) How would you rate the current strength of the Prescott Fire Department labor/management relationship?

Excellent

Good

Average

Poor

Very Poor

- 4.) Do you feel the Labor/Management Team Procedure can improve the labor/management relationship?

Yes

No

- 5.) What is the best way for the Prescott Fire Department to abide to the Labor/Management Team Procedure?

Labor Management Committee Process

Memorandum of Understanding

Implement into Policy and Procedures

Hold Labor/Management Accountable Equally

Personnel Involvement

## Appendix B

## Relevant Answers from Survey for Research

37 of 70 Surveys Returned

- 1). How many years of experience do you have with the Prescott Fire Department?

1-5 (16.2%)          6-10 (29.7%)          11-20 (18.9%)          21+ (35.1%)

- 2). Have you ever reviewed the Prescott Fire Department Labor/Management Team Procedure?

Yes (48.6%)          No (51.4%)

- 3). How would you rate the current strength of the Prescott Fire Department labor/management relationship?

Excellent (10.8%)    Good (29.7%)    Average (35.1%)    Poor (24.3%)    Very Poor (0.0%)

- 4). Do you feel the Labor/Management Team Procedure can improve the labor/management relationship?

Yes (83.3%)          No (16.7%)

- 5). What is the best way for the Prescott Fire Department to abide to the Labor/Management Team Procedure? (Check all that apply)

Labor Management Committee Process	(40.5%)
Memorandum of Understanding	(37.8%)
Implement into Policy and Procedures	(24.3%)
Hold Labor/Management Accountable Equally	(70.3%)
Personnel Involvement	(51.4%)

Appendix C

Questionnaire sent to Prescott Fire Senior Staff and Local 3066 Leadership

Sent 11-14-10 by email

Gentlemen,

I am requesting your assistance for brief commentary to enhance my evaluation of the Prescott Fire Department/ Local 3066 Labor Management Team Procedure as an effective tool to improve collaboration in our organization. It is my understanding that this procedure was presented to assist in making collaborative improvements to our organization in October 2009. Please try to provide brief commentary to each question below.

1. How would you briefly describe the current use of the PFD/Local 3066 Labor-Management Team Procedure regarding collaboration between Labor/Management at PFD?
2. How do you think a formal adoption of the document would enhance the commitment to the collaborative process?
3. List any components of the document that you think we are currently performing at a high or appropriate level. Contrary to that, list any components of the document that we seem to have not performed adequately or have areas that need improvement.

Thank you for your time in assisting me with completion of my final EFO Applied Research Project. It is my intention that some of the results can be utilized to improve our organization and the collaborative process at the PFD.

Regards,

Eric Kriwer, Division Chief  
Fire Prevention Division  
Prescott Fire Department  
Phone: 928-777-1762  
eric.kriwer@prescott-az.gov